

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Jesse James Jeter,

Plaintiff,

vs.

Palmetto Health Internal Medicine Center,

Defendant.

) C/A No. 3:10-2592-CMC-JRM

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Report and Recommendation

Background of this Case

The *pro se* plaintiff is a resident of Columbia, South Carolina. He is a former resident of the State of Washington. The plaintiff has brought suit against the Internal Medicine Center of a nonprofit medical services corporation, which is incorporated in South Carolina and has its principal place of business in South Carolina. The “STATEMENT OF CLAIM” portion of the complaint reveals that this civil action is an action under the Americans with Disabilities Act based on the defendant’s alleged failure to provide to the plaintiff certain pain medication. The plaintiff also complains about the denial of his application for Social Security benefits based on medical records provided to the Social Security Administration by the defendant.

Discussion

Under established local procedure in this judicial district, a careful review has been made of the *pro se* pleadings under 28 U.S.C. § 1915. The review¹ has been conducted in light of the following precedents: *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25 (1992); *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319 (1989); *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519 (1972); *Nasim v. Warden, Maryland House of Correction*, 64 F.3d 951 (4th Cir. 1995)(*en banc*); *Todd v. Baskerville*, 712 F.2d 70 (4th Cir. 1983); *Boyce v. Alizaduh*, 595 F.2d 948 (4th Cir. 1979) (recognizing the district court’s authority to conduct an initial screening of any *pro se* filing);² *Loe v. Armistead*, 582 F.2d 1291 (4th Cir. 1978); and *Gordon v. Leeke*, 574 F.2d 1147, 1151 (4th Cir. 1978). The plaintiff is a *pro se* litigant, and thus his pleadings are accorded liberal construction. See *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89 (2007)(*per curiam*); *Hughes v. Rowe*, 449 U.S. 5, 9-10 & n. 7 (1980)(*per curiam*); and *Cruz v. Beto*, 405 U.S. 319 (1972). When a federal court is evaluating a *pro se* complaint or petition, the plaintiff’s or petitioner’s allegations are assumed to be true. *Fine v. City of New York*, 529 F.2d 70, 74 (2nd Cir. 1975). A litigant must plead factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant or respondent is plausibly liable, not merely possibly liable. *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 129 S.Ct. 1937, 1949, 173 L.Ed.2d 868 (2009). Even under this less stringent standard, the complaint is subject to summary dismissal. The requirement of liberal construction does not mean

¹Pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B) and Local Civil Rule 73.02 DSC, the undersigned is authorized to review such complaints for relief and submit findings and recommendations to the District Court.

²*Boyce* has been held by some authorities to have been abrogated in part, on other grounds, by *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319 (1989) (insofar as *Neitzke* establishes that a complaint that fails to state a claim, under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6), does not by definition merit *sua sponte* dismissal under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i) [formerly 28 U.S.C. § 1915(d)], as “frivolous”).

that the court can ignore a clear failure in the pleading to allege facts which set forth a claim currently cognizable in a federal district court. *Weller v. Department of Social Services*, 901 F.2d 387 (4th Cir. 1990).

The mandated liberal construction afforded to *pro se* pleadings means that if the court can reasonably read the pleadings to state a valid claim on which the plaintiff could prevail, it should do so, but a district court may not rewrite a petition or complaint to include claims that were never presented, *Barnett v. Hargett*, 174 F.3d 1128, 1133 (10th Cir. 1999), or construct the plaintiff's or petitioner's legal arguments for him or her, *Small v. Endicott*, 998 F.2d 411, 417-18 (7th Cir. 1993), or "conjure up questions never squarely presented" to the court, *Beaudett v. City of Hampton*, 775 F.2d 1274, 1278 (4th Cir. 1985).

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides, in relevant part, that "no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services or activities of a public entity or be subjected to discrimination by such entity." 42 U.S.C. § 12132. The defendant is clearly a "public entity."

In any event, a claim under Title II of the ADA requires a plaintiff to show that: 1) he or she is an individual with a disability; 2) he or she was either excluded from participation in or denied the benefits of some public entity's services, programs or activities, or was otherwise discriminated against by the public entity; and 3) such exclusion, denial of benefits, or discrimination was by reason of his or her disability. See *Baird v. Rose*, 192 F.3d 462, 467 (4th Cir.1999); *Doe v. University of Maryland Medical System Corp.*, 50 F.3d 1261, 1264-65 & n. 8 (4th Cir. 1995); and *Douris v. Dougherty*, 192 F. Supp. 2d 358, 368 (E.D. Pa. 2002).

Page 8 of the complaint (ECF No. 1) shows that the plaintiff has been provided medical care by the defendant on at least eleven occasions so he has not been excluded from participation in the programs of the defendant. Hence, the plaintiff has failed to satisfy the three-part test under *Baird v. Rose*.

The plaintiff is not entitled to the pain medication of his choice. Although not directly on point, there are numerous cases relating to prisoners who have brought civil rights actions against prison physicians who have refused to provide them pain medications. *See, e.g., Charles Lamb v. Lieber Correctional Inst.*, Civil Action No. 8:09-3107-CMC-BHH, 2010 WL 56058 (D.S.C. Jan. 4, 2010) (adopting Report and Recommendation for summary dismissal of case where prisoner sought damages and a court order directing prison medical department to provide him Tylenol® 3).

A state law cause of action would be cognizable in this federal court under the diversity statute, if that statute's requirements are satisfied. *Cianbro Corporation v. Jeffcoat and Martin*, 804 F. Supp. 784, 788-791 (D.S.C. 1992), *affirmed*, *Cianbro Corporation v. Jeffcoat and Martin*, No. 92-2368, 10 F.3d 806 [Table], 1993 WL 478836 (4th Cir. Nov. 22, 1993). The diversity statute, 28 U.S.C. § 1332(a), requires complete diversity of parties and an amount in controversy in excess of seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000.00):

(a) The district courts shall have original jurisdiction of all civil actions where the matter in controversy exceeds the sum or value of \$75,000, exclusive of interest and costs, and is between—

(1) citizens of different States[.]

28 U.S.C. § 1332. Complete diversity of parties in a case means that no party on one side may be a citizen of the same State as any party on the other side. *See Owen Equipment & Erection Co. v. Kroger*, 437 U.S. 365, 372-74 (1978). Since the plaintiff and the defendant are citizens of South

Carolina, complete diversity of parties is not present in this case. *Strawbridge v. Curtiss*, 7 U.S. (3 Cranch) 267 (1806).³

Recommendation

Accordingly, it is recommended that the District Court summarily dismiss the above-captioned case *without prejudice* and without issuance and service of process. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915; and *Fitzgerald v. First East Seventh Street Tenants Corp.*, 221 F.3d 362, 363-64 (2d Cir. 2000) (“District courts . . . are . . . capable of determining when an action is frivolous. Indeed, as courts of first instance, district courts are especially likely to be exposed to frivolous actions, and thus have an even greater need for inherent authority to dismiss such actions quickly in order to preserve scarce judicial resources.”). The plaintiff’s attention is directed to the important Notice on the next page.



October 28, 2010
Columbia, South Carolina

Joseph R. McCrorey
United States Magistrate Judge

³The diversity statute provides that a corporation is a citizen of the state of its incorporation and of the state in which it has its principal place of business. 28 U.S.C. § 1332(c). Information contained on the South Carolina Secretary of State database (available on the LEXIS service) indicates that the defendant is a non-profit corporation incorporated in South Carolina.

Notice of Right to File Objections to Report and Recommendation

The plaintiff is advised that he may file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation with the District Judge. **Objections must specifically identify the portions of the Report and Recommendation to which objections are made and the basis for such objections.** “[I]n the absence of a timely filed objection, a district court need not conduct a de novo review, but instead must ‘only satisfy itself that there is no clear error on the face of the record in order to accept the recommendation.’” *Diamond v. Colonial Life & Acc. Ins. Co.*, 416 F.3d 310 (4th Cir. 2005) (*quoting* Fed. R. Civ. P. 72 advisory committee’s note).

Specific written objections must be filed within fourteen (14) days of the date of service of this Report and Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b); *see* Fed. R. Civ. P. 6(a), (d). Filing by mail pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5 may be accomplished by mailing objections to:

**Larry W. Propes, Clerk of Court
United States District Court
901 Richland Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201**

Failure to timely file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation will result in waiver of the right to appeal from a judgment of the District Court based upon such Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); *Thomas v. Arn*, 474 U.S. 140 (1985); *Wright v. Collins*, 766 F.2d 841 (4th Cir. 1985); *United States v. Schronce*, 727 F.2d 91 (4th Cir. 1984).